

Vision Of The Future

FFC 41B-031 Final Paper

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Abstract

This capstone project explores the current constraints on

individuals' cognitive infrastructure as mediated through interpersonal relationships, relationships to oneself, the individual's place within the system and the space in-between.

It examines specifically how these constraints are leading to adverse outcomes in design thinking and product design through the ongoing homogenization of all design products because of the inability and unwillingness to conceive new design ideas.



Initially using a Three-pronged framework of Bronfenbrenner's

CONTEXT WITHOUT DEVELOPMENT / AN ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT / RESEARCH MODELS IN THE STUDY OF

Ecological Model(1992) which examines the relationship between

DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT / PROPERTIES OF THE PERSON FROM AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE / PARAMETERS OF CONTEXT FROM A

different systems, Higgin's Self Discrepancy Theory(1989) which

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE / FORM AND SUBSTANCE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

describes the one possesses, wants to possess and ought to

posses ,Foucault's Governmentality(1978), which examines

Foucault, M. (1978). The birth of biopolitics lectures at the college de France, 1978-1979. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

the strategies that society is rendered 'governable' this

groundwork for the capstone eventually grew to borrow heavily

from Agamben's Biopolitics (2005) which can be seen as a

contemporary analog of Foucault's theory, and later Baudrillard's

Simulation(1994) which posits that contemporary society has

Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation.

become a simulacrum, a copy without an original.



This matrix was utilized to explain why designers **can** no longer come up with novel or beautiful solutions? Why does all design

look the same and what is the driving force behind this? These

questions were addressed through a series of phenomenological

analyses and studies of existing creative works, current events

and design objects which were then rendered into a 21,000+

word, 213-page book and split up into 4 chapters made up of

original and curated written and visual works exploring a

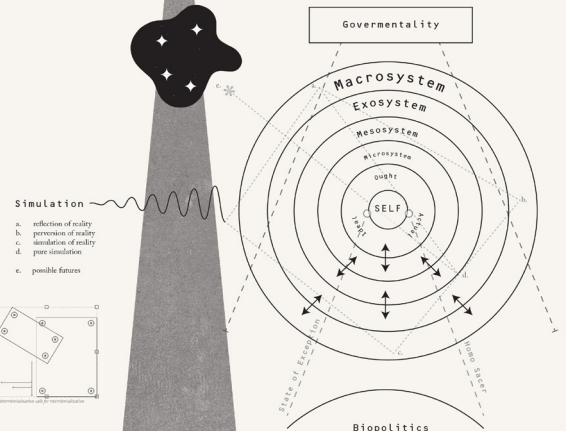
different facet of this totalizing HOMOGENIZATION OF

DESIGN and what can be done about it.

Vision Of The Future Matrix

the Center of Gravity, the architecture of being, information upon the design landscape presents a vision.

4/2/2023



Proposed Capstone

Vision Of The Future

[VOTF]

grew out of an earlier curation project of mine. Cognizant of cultural stagnation

the original VOTF project examined design artefacts from the 1990s and early

2000s in broadly what is referred to as the Y2K era (Collins & Tam, 2023). In

Collins, E. & Tam, F. (2023). Consumer Aesthetics Research Institute. Cari.institute. <https://cari.institute/aesthetics/y2k-aesthetic>

my estimation, this was the last period of time that didn't majorly rely on

regurgitating cheap nostalgia to produce cultural products and also the last

point in human history that society was optimistic about its future. The title

comes from a slogan that was moderately popular in corporate literature of

THE PROJECT SET OUT TO VISUALISE HOW PRODUCTS MAY LOOK LIKE AND WORK IN TEN YEARS TIME, HYPOTHESISING THAT PRODUCTS WOULD

the period (徳仁・吉岡, 2002 & Philips Design, 1998) and reflects the latent

STRIVE TO MEET PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND DESIRES, RATHER THAN VIEWING THESE INNOVATIONS THROUGH A LIMITED TECHNOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW.

optimism of the 1990s.

This concept struck me as maybe the most pressing issue in design today and

thus required immediate and in depth study. However, realizing that being caught

up in the past and lamenting the present is no way to proceed, VOTF became a

design project in it's own right drawing upon a set of personal references to try

and make sense of this sordid state of affairs. Understanding homogenization of

REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING HUMANS. TO RECOUNT BYUNG CHUL HAN

design required a close reading of as many aspects of design as possible and as

"The human being is a creature of luxury. In the original and authentic sense, luxury is not a practice of consumption. Rather, it means a mode of living that is free of necessity"

such the scope encompasses far more than just fashion design.

The creative development was spread across visual, and text based

probes into various phenomena to try and get at the heart of the

flattening of our design language. Utilizing three primary mediums:

Graphic Design, Photography & Writing topics and content were

contextualized into 4 sections or chapters each reflecting a larger

causation for the problems facing designers today. **Material**

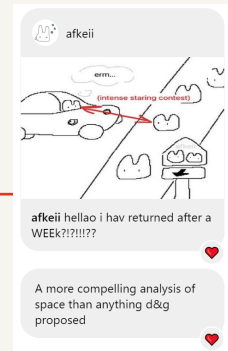
Culture, Space, Cognitive Infrastructure

and **Communication**. Material Culture focuses on the end

products of designers, Space focuses on our geographies and the

physical spaces we occupy Cognitive Infrastructure is how we think,

and Communication is how meaning is sent and received.





Major Research Themes

The primary themes that were devised through my research came about from the conceptual framework or idea matrix.

Governmentality and Biopolitics work in tandem from

oppositional

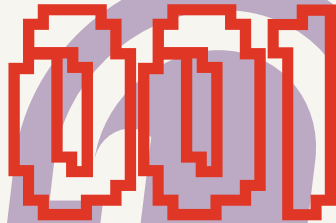
planes penetrating

through all manner of relationships designers attempt to navigate. Encompassing the intersubjective partnership of Higgin's and Bronfrenbrenner's theories and models observing the constraints placed on individuals through their relations with themselves and within their systems is what I'm referring to as relational geography. Essentially how designers **navigate their environments** through places and people. The final research theme touches on our ability to communicate and think, Baudrillard's ideas on Hyperreality and Simulation(1994)

Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation.

immediately come to mind acting like 3-D glasses permanently affixed to the wearers face altering their perception. We're at a point where we love simulation more than reality and desperately don't want the charades to end. The implications these 5 theories have on my research but more importantly design as a whole are immediate and stark. They must be reckoned with if we have any hope of keeping imagination alive.

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Governmentality and Biopolitics

For something to be realized, it must be publicly conceivable, an idea I expressed within my capstone and that is most relevant to Foucault's and Agamben's work as it relates to my research. This is to say that an idea cannot merely be a matter of private identification, but must be recognizable by another to give **rise to its own existence**. We are not solipsists trapped in the cave but living breathing humans engaging with each other. Foucault's governmentality deals with the ways nation states and their proxies render populations 'governable' (1979). In a contemporary sense this is achieved through the management of our physical faculties as well as significant investment in managing our cognitive infrastructure.

We've been talking about information overload for the past 15 years(Hemp, 2009) but, with new forms of social media and the rise of the war on

Hemp, P. (2009, August). Death by Information Overload. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2009/09/death-by-information-overload>

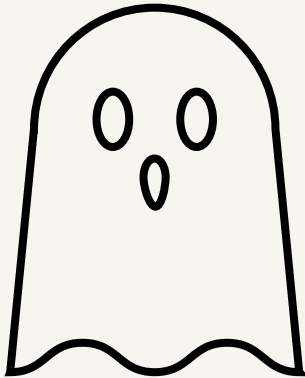
'misinformation' (Siegal,2023) (conveniently coinciding with the end of the war on terror) our government have devised new ways to exert control over their citizens via the expansion of the biopolitical surveillance state

and management of our cognitive faculties essentially keeping us in echo chambers shouting at the shadows on the walls. Some of the ways this is achieved is through what Agamben calls (rather redundantly) 'the permanent state of exception'(2005) whereby current governments skirt nominal rule of law in the name of an unending list of emergencies that call for 'exceptions' to the established traditions. This can clearly be seen through not only the war on terror, but most recently the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of design governments and their proxies dictating what ideas and actions are permissible to express and the instability caused by existing in a state of exception severely limit the creator's imagination for fear of reprisals and a palpable inability to think clearly.

SYSTEMIC OPERATIONAL DESIGN SOD IS AN APPLICATION OF SYSTEMS THEORY TO OPERATIONAL ART. IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO RATIONALIZE COMPLEXITY THROUGH SYSTEMIC LOGIC EMPLOYING A HOLISTIC APPROACH THAT TRANSLATES STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND POLICY INTO OPERATIONAL LEVEL DESIGNS



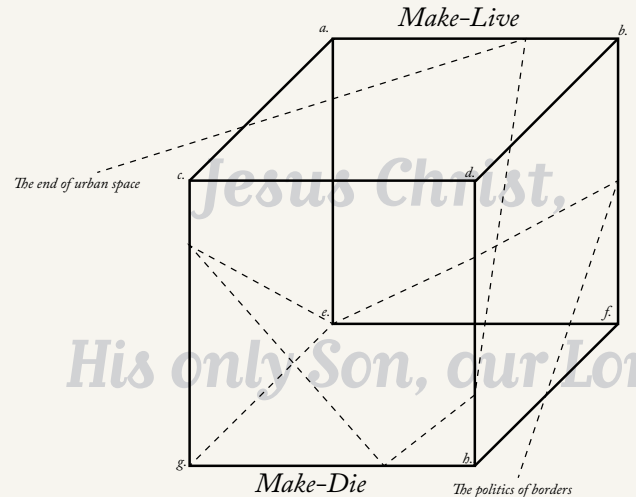
This theme showed up in most of my writing as I view it as the most destructive and immediately obvious symptoms of homogeneity in design. It was recurrent throughout the op-eds specifically *When the House Burns*, *Balenciaga Spring 2023* and *Fractals of the Self* as well as many of the graphic works such as *Manifesto* for *CCTV Filmmakers* and *Spheres of Influence* among others. Much of these works were explicitly political in nature and dealt with biopolitics, conspiracy theories, misinformation, and surveillance, somewhat of a holdover from my millennial upbringing as Gen-Z seems wholly uninterested in these concerns.



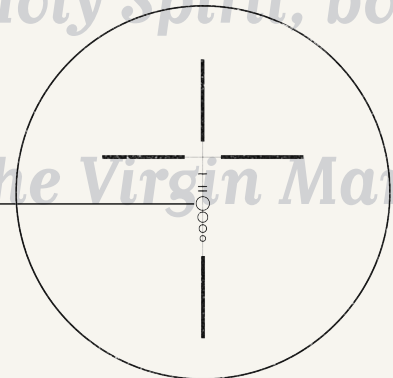
ψυχή
Psychē
localization of the mind

ahh! scary!!!

noo, don't do your own research nooooo!!!



a. power over life	e. normalization
b. population control	f. medicalization
c. governmentality	g. biopower
d. discipline	h. resistance





Relational Geography

what we need: is a road map
but of life's place

Drawing on Foucault's panopticon relational geography deals

most closely with interpersonal and intersystematic relationships that govern the designer's ability to create.

PEOPLE EXPERIENCE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS WHEN THERE IS A DISCREPANCY BETWEEN

THEIR ACTUAL SELF AND EITHER THEIR IDEAL SELF OR THEIR OUGHT SELF.

Higgin's Self Discrepancy Theory looks at the way individuals

perceive and desire their own attributes and qualities

the discrepancy between actual and ought self can cause

social anxiety and depression leading to an inability to

think or act. In terms of design this can lead to imposter

syndrome or feelings of inadequacy and is caused by



OVERTHINKING

However if one is able to get over themselves they still have to contend with what is described

by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory which deals

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1992). Ecological systems theory. In

with the complex set of relationships between the self and all

R. Vasta (Ed.), Six theories of child development; Revised

the sociological systems one might encounter. This covers off

formulations and current issues (pp. 187-249). Jessica

the distinctions between the designer and everyone around

Kingsley Publishers.

the designer. This theme appeared in the photo editorials

Towers in the Park, *21 Objects* and *Waiting for Godot*, as well

some of the graphic work and broader written editorial themes.

Waiting for Godot in particular addressed both theories as the source material is about

nursing unacted desire through

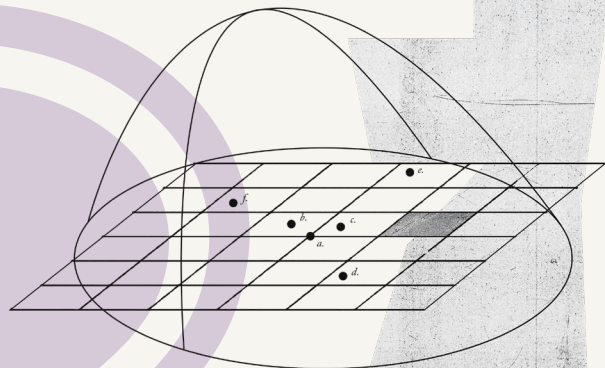
two protagonists. *21 Objects* observes the effects of

ruminating on good design, how it can both inspire and

paralyze the observer, while *Towers in the Park* is much

more straightforwardly about analyzing urban space and

the relationship it has to class, architecture and urbanism.

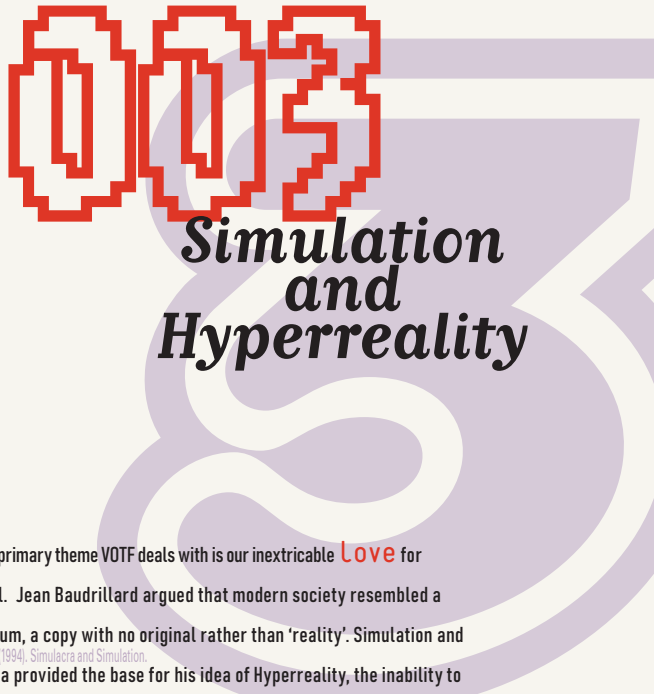


leviathan

the all seeing leviathan panopticon whatever
glaring it's deep red glass eye over all of us.

to borrow from D&G (no, not THAT D&G)

a rhizomatic approach may be
necessary to navigate the eerie
terrain we now call reality.



003

Simulation and Hyperreality

The third primary theme VOTF deals with is our inextricable **Love** for the unreal. Jean Baudrillard argued that modern society resembled a simulacrum, a copy with no original rather than 'reality'. Simulation and Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Simulacra provided the base for his idea of Hyperreality, the inability to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality. As good a description of our current condition as any. In design what has transpired over the past decade and really ever since the **smartphone** became a cultural

mainstay is that society at large is in love with simulation, we love artifice, we love being tricked, we love living in a comfortable ideal especially when it is at odds with what is actually going on around us in the real world. The proliferation of **the internet – the most present example of hyperreality**

– into physically invading our lives at all moments of the day has had catastrophic effects on the design world. Originality is all but defeated as we crawl into cheap nostalgia, kitsch, and plagiarism. An idea I expressed in VOTF was that no one seems

to care if an idea is original anymore, just that it's "good" (in the superego creates desire by establishing prohibitions and limitations on what we can and the most superficial Lacanian sense of the word). This theme cannot do, by defining what is off-limits or taboo, the superego creates a space for transgression and subversion, which can lead to a heightened sense of desire. showed up in *Fractals of the Self* as well as the humorous

CHATGPT written essay *Virgil's Dead*. The graphic works *Nests* and *Algorithmic Scores* also touch on this theme.

Accretive Creation

001

There are three main kinds of content within VOTF:

Photography, Graphic Design and Writing. Photography was developed to borrow from styles prominent in the 1990s; Daido Moriyama and Takashi Homma were direct influences, the way both artists crush their blacks and utilize grain make their work feel like a fleeting glimpse of a memory, a real snapshot in time. The inherent temporality of their work seemed fitting to draw upon for VOTF because it feels as if time itself is speeding up as we crash into the age of machine learning, algorithms and lines of code accelerate consumption to the point where a millisecond of screen time is prime real estate.

002

The graphic layout for the book was more conventional than my past work, however several key advances were made, the use and development of colour, fluorescent green, purples, reds, and oranges helped give the book an enlivening appeal something that would not have been possible if I had kept to using a black and white colour palette, green in particular – the colour of life – became all important and guided the entire development. Graphic works drew on scientific and philosophical diagrams as



well as typographic treatments internalized from firms like Émigré, The Designer's Republic and Tomato. Although applied more conservatively there is a clear line of influence from their work to mine. Typefaces were chosen to reflect a technological theme, **FK Raster Grotesk** was the first typeface I found and decided to deploy it liberally as an accent, while pairing it with **OCR B**

003

004

and **FK Grotesk**. The writing is meant to be stream of consciousness diatribes that explore ideas as 'a beautiful object' rather than the moral and political considerations of those ideas. What I mean is an idea like every **Deterritorialization** a **reterritorialization**, every **Decolonialism** a **neocolonialism** is itself a beautiful object and when considering this with my unorthodox form of analysis the writing should be considered less as absolutist statements of the author's truth and instead as an attempt to work through the latent contradictions of whatever I happened to be interested in at the time of writing. Stylistically I borrow from niche internet influencers as well as integrating continental philosophy and post-structuralism to hopefully create something that if not insightful is at least aesthetically pleasing and humorous to read.

So, What Does It All Mean?



Vision Of The Future culminated in the creation of 16 original works (17, including this codex) and 1 curated essay which was published digitally and physically in a 213 page book. The importance of digital publication was for accessibility to my friends and colleagues who do not live in Toronto, while the physical book represents the triumph over the last three years of Covid-19 pandemic measures as well the creation of a physical artefact. Around 75% of the creative works exist within the primary research themes while the remaining 25% effectively and intelligently synthesize the themes into compelling new content and offer a glimpse at what may be possible for designers again. *The Future Loves Me, Vision of the Future* (the essay), *Millions Living Must Die, Marfa, Texas, Glasgow School of Art & A Suburban Composite* reflect this synthesis. Each content placed within its constituent container or chapter represents an individual probe and to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari are instantiations of a kind of rhizomatic thinking (1980) Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1980). *A thousand plateaus : capitalism and schizophrenia*. London [U.A.] Bloomsbury. which seeks to break away from traditional thesis or capstone models and establish a series of aesthetic tendrils with which to perform phenomenological analyses of what I believe to be the most pressing issue in design today – our inability to create anything new.

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